PROVINCE
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Speech from the Throne

At The Opening of the

Fourth Session

of the

Fifty-sixth General Assembly

of the Province of

Prince Edward Island

March 24th, 1986

THE HONOURABLE
LLOYD G. MacPHAIL

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

86-03604/

MADAME SPEAKER, AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

It is my privilege, in the name of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to welcome you to the Fourth Session of the Fifty-Sixth General Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island.

In 1985 the people of Prince Edward Island welcomed Her Excellency, Madame Jeanne Sauvé, Governor General of Canada. The warm reception afforded the Queen's official representative was a display of our community and cultural pride as well as our respect for our Monarch.

En 1985 les habitants de l'Ile-du-Prince-Edouard ont eu l'honneur de recevoir Son Excellence Madame Jeanne Sauvé, Gouverneur Général du Canada. L'accueil chaleureux que nous avons fait à la représentante officielle de la Reine révéla notre fierté sociale et culturelle ainsi que notre respect profond envers notre Monarque.

Also, during the past year, important milestones were reached by a number of national bodies represented in the Province.

My Government was honoured to be associated with celebrations for the 75th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Diamond Jubilee of the Royal Canadian Legion, the 75th Anniversary of the Girl Guides of Canada, and the Centennial of Parks Canada.

ECONOMIC INITIATIVES

The past year has been one of economic growth in the Province. Our labour force has increased steadily, as has the number of Islanders employed. The population of the Province is at its highest level in history, reflecting great confidence in our future. Housing construction experienced substantial growth in the past year, and my Government is especially pleased that such activity is spread throughout the Island. Despite the impact of world prices on our agriculture industry, all other sectors of the economy experienced solid growth.

It is evident that people are returning to our Island Province with renewed hope and optimism. While my Government is encouraged by these signals, challenges remain to be met.

In 1985 my Government was able to negotiate an agreement with the Federal Government to reduce electricity costs by as much as 25 per cent. For the first time, the Government of Canada has agreed, by way of Special Mediator, to assist us in securing long-term solutions to our energy needs. Parity with our sister Provinces remains our objective.

Transportation remains an essential element in the future growth of the Island economy. My Government has some concerns about the National Transportation Policy proposed by the Federal Government. Our objection to this policy will continue to be made and, at the same time, the input of Islanders will be sought on the future direction of transportation as it affects Prince Edward Island.

Working closely with representatives of the potato industry, my Government has responded with emergency assistance totalling $6,000,000, the first Government in North America to do so. New strategies for more effective marketing must be worked out in close cooperation with the industry, the Federal Government and other producing provinces. My Government is prepared to work further with the industry in the evolvement of these ideas so that stability will result for the industry.

Last year, major initiatives were launched to save the red meat industry on Prince Edward Island. The Hog Incentive Program, which was put in place to achieve our long-term goals, will be continued.

We look forward to the opening of the new Garden Province Meat Plant in April. This plant, which is 65 per cent owned by the producers of the Province, will play a major role in both the preservation and expansion of this industry.

The fishing industry in our Province continues to prosper; our fishermen in 1985 saw the value of their landings reach an all time high and record catches were achieved in a number of species. Positive results of my Government's efforts to enhance fish quality were achieved through the support and cooperation of the fishermen and processors. This market-led approach has resulted in increased returns from the marketplace and has established our province as a leader in this field among the Canadian industry.

My Government will again place priority on quality enhancement programs in the coming year.

My Government appreciates the significance of our fish processing industry in the creation of jobs in this Province. Accordingly, aggressive efforts will ensure that our processing sector has the opportunity to increase productivity and efficiency in an industry which competes on the world market. My Government will continue to encourage the maximum utilization of our fisheries resources within the Province.

Fishermen will be encouraged and assisted to invest in their individual businesses to enable them to maintain a competitive edge and secure the viability of their fishing enterprises.

The shellfish industy continues to make great strides in the Province. Our cultured mussel industry is quickly obtaining a worldwide reputation. My Government's strong support of the shellfish industry will continue.

Efforts to expand the tourism season were initiated last year with a three-year Shoulder Season Program. This program has received strong support from the tourism industry, and even stronger growth is expected this year.

My Government is proud of its initiatives to develop tourism in all areas of the Province. We now have a convention industry flourishing in Mill River, Summerside, Charlottetown and Brudenell which provides an additional dimension to our growing tourist trade.

My Government's initiatives in woodlot management and forest development have fostered great advancements in this primary industry and are being hailed across the country for their success. Wood biomass conversions have been completed at the Kings County Memorial Hospital, Montague Junior High School, Souris Regional High School, Sleepy Hollow Correctional Centre, Wedgewood Manor, Prince Edward Home, and Evangeline School.

The most recent survey indicates 61 per cent of Island homes are burning more than 120,000 cords of wood, displacing over $20,000,000 worth of imported oil. The wood industry has become a significant employer with over 300 woodlot owners involved in the production of fuel wood.

This year the Department of Energy and Forestry will supply over 2 million seedlings for reforestation efforts, thus ensuring the ongoing success of this industry and the upgrading of our woodlands.

While industries based on our natural resources remain the cornerstone of our economy, my Government has clearly stated in its economic policy paper, "Blending Tradition and Innovation", that adjustment, modernization and adaptation are necessary. Industries which are attracted in pursuit of this goal must be appropriate to our economic circumstances and our traditions. The Province — and our way of life — are able to attract the type of industries that will assist in this adjustment, and make us, as Islanders, more self-reliant.

The Atlantic Veterinary College, scheduled to open in 1986, is a major step in this direction. The College is not only attracting new businesses to our Island, but will provide vital support services to our farmers and fishermen.

Through the skill and ingenuity of local entrepreneurs, the manufacturing sector of this province continues to grow. Initiatives of the Department of Industry and the Prince Edward Island Development Agency will encourage and assist such initiatives.

New programs to assist cultural industries have proven very successful. My Government will continue in its support of cultural industries which are appropriate to our Island way of life and which will also create jobs. Additional support will be provided to Holland College for its Visual Arts Program.

Protectionism in the United States is creating a problem for our fishing and agricultural sectors and that is one of the reasons the Federal Government wishes to recommence discussions about expanded trade. My Government will take part in these discussions but only after close consultation with the sectors involved. Consequently, we have invited representatives of all sectors of our economy to participate in formulating our position for these most important negotiations.

To foster continued growth in all economic sectors, my Government intends to introduce new initiatives and legislation.

Recognizing the rural nature of our Province, Right to Farm legislation will be introduced to ensure our farmers of the opportunity to carry on their traditional business.

My Government, in its attempts to strengthen our agricultural sector, has entered into an agreement with the Federal Government, and with producers, to offer a price stabilization scheme to beef producers. A similar program for lamb producers will be signed in the near future.

Existing labour legislation will be amended to ensure the right of a striking worker to return to work subsequent to the settlement of a legal strike.

Legislation will be introduced to create a distinct Department of Tourism.

The more established tourism areas of our Province experience increased visitations each year. Government is proud of its success in firmly establishing the tourist industry in western Prince Edward Island. Accordingly, in pursuit of efforts to expand the tourist industry across the entire Province, my Government remains determined to expand the tourist industry in eastern Prince Edward Island. This development will assure the preservation of the natural beauty of the area while, at the same time, attracting a substantial tourist trade.

The first step in this development will be a major effort to determine the best means to accomplish our objectives. With the advice and support of area groups, associations, municipaliites and individuals, we are confident a greater tourism presence can be achieved.

Consistent with my Government's support for our local communities and industrial development in all areas of the Province, my Government is committed to support Georgetown Shipyards to modernize its operations by the installation of a synchrolift. This initiative will secure the future of the shipyard.

While my Government's economic initiatives have as their prime objective the strengthening of the Island economy based on our primary resources, the ultimate result is the creation of jobs for Islanders. My Government is determined to create meaningful, long-term jobs. Because of the small size of our private sector, a measure of Government involvement has always been needed and will be continued.

My Government has successfully negotiated 12 Economic and Regional Development Agreements with the Federal Government representing more than $200 million in development efforts. Several additional agreements are now being negotiated.

Progress has been made in improving the Island highway system. This year a number of bridges will be replaced and upgraded with careful attention to the environment and increased transportation requirements. Clay roads will be upgraded and greater emphasis will be placed on resurfacing existing roadways to ensure higher standards for modern traffic.

The rural communities of this Province, which have been revitalized over the past seven years, will continue to grow and prosper only if the people of these communities can find meaningful, long-term employment. Accordingly, my government's treasured goal remains the creation of jobs through appropriate initiatives in all of these communities.

Work for all is essential.

Accordingly, my Government has developed a Job Creation Strategy which will foster the creation of hundreds of jobs and will have the following thrusts:

1. The establishment of a Community Economic Development Fund to encourage rural communities to establish ongoing, viable ventures for the improvement of the overall economic well-being of the community. This will occur through venture planning assistance and capital grants.
2. A Youth Employment Program which will include new programs specifically targeted to meet the needs of youth. A Youth Employment Coordinator will be hired within the Department of Industry to spearhead this effort.
3. The expansion of programs in the Department of Industry and the Prince Edward Island Development Agency which are oriented towards assisting industries and businesses in creating long-term jobs.
4. The Capital Project Initiatives undertaken by my Government will continue, thereby creating many jobs for people in all trades across the Province.

Important to this Job Creation Strategy are my Government's efforts to attract appropriate industries to assist in the expansion of our Island economy.

SOCIAL INITIATIVES

As an indication of the importance which my Government places on social issues, a "Policy on Social Development" was tabled in this House last year. In support of the philosophy, principles and directions outlined in that document, my Government has undertaken, and will continue to undertake, a number of initiatives which are intended to support and strengthen families, create development opportunities for the disabled, identify and address issues of concern to women and youth and, as well, to improve the quality of health care in Prince Edward Island. Fundamental to these initiatives is our belief in strong communities.

A Family Support Program to ease the financial burden for families who wish to provide support and care for disabled children at home and within the family was initiated over the past year and this Program will continue, with expansion in various areas.

My Government has increased funding to community organizations which provide a variety of vocational and residential services to disabled or disadvantaged individuals in various communities across our Province. The role which these organizations play in the provision of such services is recognized and applauded by all Islanders.

The Office of the Youth Ambassador has provided a focal point within Government for young people and it has also heightened awareness of the concerns of youth today as well as their hopes and aspirations for the future. In response to the concerns of our young people, my Government will introduce job creation initiatives for young people.

The creation of the Women's Directorate will assist my Government in developing appropriate responses to the issues and priorities identified by the women of Prince Edward Island.

To improve upon the high quality of health care in Prince Edward Island, my Government has supported the establishment of a Neo-Natal Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the expansion and upgrading of laboratory facilities at the Prince County Hospital and an accredited psychiatric unit at Prince County Hospital. Detailed planning has been completed for the new Souris Hospital and construction will begin this spring.

Consistent with my Government's philosophy and objective to enable the elderly people of this Province to remain in their own communities as long as possible, the Home Care Program which allows senior citizens to receive some medical services in their own homes will be expanded.

While home-based care for some is desirable, institutional care for others is often inevitable. Accordingly, my Government is continuing its determined efforts to upgrade the level of institutional care in the Province. Examples of this effort include the new and expanded facilities at the Hillsborough Hospital, Wedgewood Manor and the Prince Edward Home. A new Beach Grove Home is under construction and will offer another first class health care option to Islanders.

My Government also recognizes the major role the private sector plays in the provision of quality community care facilities across the Island and will continue to work with such groups to ensure the best care possible and welcomes their input.

In response to recommendations from the Child Care Facilities Board, Government has strengthened the Child Care Facilities Regulations to ensure that well-qualified staff operate these facilities.

The high costs of prescription drugs for senior citizens and others requiring extensive medication is a concern to all of us. Accordingly, my Government will introduce a Pharmacare Program aimed at assisting seniors. My Government is also concerned about individuals in society who are burdened by ongoing high drug bills, and we will be addressing their needs within the limits of the Province's financial capability.

In recognition of the importance of the rental housing sector to many Islanders, my Government will be initiating a public review of the RENT REVIEW ACT and the LANDLORD/TENANT ACT.

Housing is important to the proper development of our communities. The inability of individuals to obtain financing in rural areas has long been an obstacle. To address this, my Government will introduce a program whereby funds will be made available to Island Credit Unions enabling them to provide loans at conventional mortgage rates to Islanders wishing to build their homes, and locate in the rural communities of our Province.

The Emergency Home Repair Program introduced last year for senior citizens will be expanded. As well, the scope of the program will be broadened to provide funding to assist lower income families who require emergency repairs to their homes.

The provision of quality and affordable accommodation for Islanders on low and fixed incomes is important in a caring society. My Government, with the cooperation and assistance of the Federal Government, will construct 90 new units of social housing. This represents an increased undertaking and is in response to increased demand.

In the coming year, my Government will provide Regional School Boards with additional staff in the area of Special Education. This additional staff will be supplied outside of the pupil-teacher ratio as recommended by the Paquette Report Advisory Committee.

Consistent with my Government's desire to diversify the economy, and thus provide jobs in new areas, Holland College will continue to be supported in its efforts to train Islanders to meet the needs of a changing workplace.

Work is underway on the establishment of a "cluster" of courses on renewable resources at the Summerside Centre, reflecting our concern for the environment and the primary industries so closely related to it.

In recognition of the concerns raised by many individuals and groups across our Province regarding the unregulated availability of film and video materials at retail outlets, my Government will introduce a film/video classification system.

Because of the hardships suffered by individuals and families as a result of crime, my Government intends to introduce a compensation plan for innocent victims of crime.

During the past year, my Government, with the assistance of the law enforcement agencies in the Province, stepped up efforts to reduce drinking and driving. These efforts will continue in an attempt to curtail this most serious problem. Funding of the Safe Grad Program will continue, fostering a new attitude toward the use of drugs and alcohol in our society.

GENERAL

The beautification of our Island Province and the protection of our environment is a major concern of my Government. The efforts of the P.E.I. Rural Beautification Society, the Women's Institutes, as well as other community groups, municipalities and individuals, across this Province are to be applauded.

Islanders have always expressed a deep concern for the protection of our environment. My Government's program of roadside beautification, introduced last year, will be continued. Various other initiatives - such as the storage of hazardous wastes, cleanup of our countryside, development of scenic lookouts, cc ·nity landscaping programs, and community signage programs - will be carried out over the next year.

As part of my Government's commitment to strengthen the infrastructure of Island municipalities, a five-year plan for funding the construction of sewer and water facilities will be introduced. Such a plan will allow Island municipalities to plan their development properly and efficiently over the course of the next five years. This initiative will also be an important job creation project for Islanders.

To recognize the significant role which the family plays in our Island society, my Government will be proposing that one week during each session of this House be observed as Family Week.

MADAM SPEAKER, AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

A number of legislative proposals will be introduced for your consideration, including:

Amendments to the ELECTION EXPENSES ACT;
Amendments to the PETROLEUM PRODUCTS ACT;
Amendments to the LABOUR ACT;
A PUBLIC SERVICE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT;
Amendments to the CIVIL SERVICE ACT;
Amendments to the LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ACT; and
An ADMINISTRATION ACT 1986

You will be asked to appropriate the funds required for the services and payments required by this Assembly.

The public accounts and reports of the various Departments and Agencies for the year ending March 31, 1985, will be tabled for your information. The Interim Report, forecasting estimated revenues and expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1986, and the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 1986, will be presented for your consideration.

MADAME L'ORATEUR ET MEMBRES DE L'ASSEMBLEE LEGISLATIVE:

Puisse la divine Providence vous guider dans vos délibérations.

MADAM SPEAKER, AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

May Divine Providence guide your deliberations.